

Blarina Shuns Being Exposed

LE ROY LINTEREUR
Area Game Manager, Marinette



Everyone has Blarina in the backyard and this is one of the amenities.

That's the good news. Now for the bad news . . . few people ever see the creature alive, and about the most we can hope for is a battered, blurred specimen cast aside by some fox or cat who made a mistake.

Blarina is a shrew, properly called shrew mole, or short-tail shrew, a big, burly, greyish fellow who goes through the world, like all shrews, with a perpetual chip on his shoulder. Imagine a small grey mouse with arms sort of severed at the elbows, feet like tiny little hands, a stub of a tail, and a nose like Pinnochio. Then, set the creature to squeaking his way through the leaves and grass, wiggling its nose constantly at the world, and that's Blarina.

He is by all odds, the biggest of the shrews in our area, and I think one of the most numerous. I'd say this about no other animal . . . he has a strong body scent, must more so than most, and sometimes it is powerful enough to make him a mammal of distinction. You'd think animals who squeak, smell, and

patter around, would be observed more often, but being shrews, they live their lives out amongst people who are not even aware they exist.

All shrews like to burrow and Blarina, being bigger, tunnels more than most. He searches for bugs, baby mice and shrews, really anything that he can handle . . . with gusto, too.

If the predators could have a taste first, Blarina would gain few enemies. It must be the poor flavor. More than any other animal, they are likely to be found with only a few marks, cast aside by a predator who must have surely cursed out his luck.

A dead Blarina is better than none at all, and I can never resist examining them. It's the feet that get me, and that nose plus the pinpoint eyes peeking through the fur. As you would guess, the skeleton is really something to behold, a work of wonder, created just for these powerful little animals.

Blarina is a shrew, but its closest relative is, alas, in far-off China, where its cousin Blarinella, burrows about . . . in the rice straw, I suppose. It is, as the saying goes, a small world.

the board decides

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Conservation Warden, 28 years; Thomas A. Klick, Black River Falls, Waters Inventory Biologist, 28½ years; Alex A. Lang, Wausau, Natural Resources Assistant, Rib Mountain State Park, 27+ years; Walter I. Mix, Gordon, Forest Conservation Technician, Brule River

State Forest, 25 years; Willard C. Sieh, Osceola, Supervisor and Foreman, Fish Hatchery, 28 years; Alvin H. Welk, Merrill, Forest Fire Control Assistant, 18 years; Walter Schmidt, Natural Resources Assistant I, Griffith State Nursery, Wisconsin Rapids, 19 years; Floyd P.

Spinks, Park Ranger at the Southern Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest, 22 years; and Henry T. Woodzick, Friendship, Fire Control Dispatcher, after 32 years of service.